



Program Brief

“The U.S. Presidential Election: Process and Politics in 2004”

Lectures by

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Thomas H. Neale

Thomas H. Neale was born in Auburn, New York, in 1947. He attended the public schools of Solvay New York. He received a bachelor of science in foreign service degree from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., in 1969, and pursued additional studies at Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, and the Université de Dijon, Dijon, France.

Mr. Neale was appointed to the staff of the Library of Congress in 1970, and joined the Congressional Research Service (CRS) in 1971. Since that time, he has been promoted successively to his current position of project management coordinator for the Government and Finance Division. As project management coordinator he performs duties in the fields of administration, review, and research and analysis. In the second capacity, he reviews CRS reports, confidential memoranda, and other written products prepared for Members and staff of the U.S. Congress for accuracy, grammar, syntax, style, and policy. His research and analysis portfolio currently includes U.S. elections, with concentration on the presidency and the electoral college; U.S. presidential and vice presidential qualifications, terms and tenure, and disability; and U.S. constitutional history and theory.

In addition to being the author of over 200 CRS reports for Congress and confidential memoranda, Mr. Neale has contributed to such internal publications as *The Library of Congress Information Bulletin* and *LCPA Insights*. He is the author of articles appearing in *The Encyclopedia of the United States Congress* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995) and *The Encyclopedia of the United States in the 19th Century* (New York: Scribner's, 2001). He was also chief editorial and historical consultant for *Landmark Legislation, 1774-2002: Major U.S. Acts and Treaties*, by Stephen W. Stathis (Washington: CQ Press, 2003). Currently, he is collaborating with Stephen W. Stathis on a new history and analysis of major policy debates in the U.S. Congress. He has also served as a panelist on U.S.I.A. Worldnet television and Voice of America radio broadcasts.

Mr. Neale is a member of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, the Onondaga Historical Association, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and the Capitol Hill Club. He resides in Washington, D.C., and Seven Valleys, Pennsylvania.



CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE

[\(http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/\)](http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/)

History and Mission

Congress created CRS in order to have its own source of nonpartisan, objective analysis and research on all legislative issues. Indeed, the sole mission of CRS is to serve the United States Congress. CRS has been carrying out this mission since 1914, when it was first established as the Legislative Reference Service. Renamed the Congressional Research Service by the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, CRS is committed to providing the Congress, throughout the legislative process, comprehensive and reliable analysis, research and information services that are timely, objective, nonpartisan, and confidential, thereby contributing to an informed national legislature.

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U.S. GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

...Each state shall appoint, in such manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a number of electors, equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or person holding an office of trust or profit under the United States, shall be appointed an elector.

The electors shall meet in their respective states, and vote by ballot for two persons, of whom one at least shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves. And they shall make a list of all the persons voted for, and of the number of votes for each; which list they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the seat of the government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate. The President of the Senate shall, in the presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the certificates, and the votes shall then be counted...

(Article II of the U.S. Constitution)

Topical page from the web site of the U.S. Embassy Vienna, Austria

- [ELECTIONS 2004](http://www.usembassy.at/en/us/elections.htm)
(<http://www.usembassy.at/en/us/elections.htm>)

GENERAL INFORMATION

- [U.S. Elections 2004](#) - Bureau of International Information Programs/U.S. Department of State
 - [Federal Election Commission](#) - In 1975, Congress created the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to administer and enforce the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) - the statute that governs the financing of federal elections. The duties of the FEC, which is an independent regulatory agency, are to disclose campaign finance information, to enforce the provisions of the law such as the limits and prohibitions on contributions, and to oversee the public funding of Presidential elections.
 - [Foreign Press Centers](#)/U.S. Department of State - links to sites which provide information on the election process, candidates, political parties, election calendar, elections trivia and news coverage.
 - [Elections 2004](#) (pdf)
- This publication by the Bureau of International Information Programs/U.S. Department of State provides an introductory overview of the American electoral process for people who are not familiar with U.S. election practices and traditions. For "U.S. Elections 2004," seven experts were asked, mostly political scientists, to explain significant aspects of the upcoming elections to international audiences who may have different ways of electing their government.
- German translations of articles



Bureau of International Information Programs/ U.S. Department of State

- [U.S. Elections 2004](http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections.html)
(<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections.html>)
 - [U.S. Elections Glossary](http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections/glossary.html)
(<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections/glossary.html>)

- [U.S. Elections Frequently Asked Questions](http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections/elections_faq.html)
(http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections/elections_faq.html)
- [2004 Election Events Calendar](http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections/elections_calendar.html)
(http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections/elections_calendar.html)
- [Election Focus 2004 – Newsletter](http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections/elections_newsletter.html)
(http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections/elections_newsletter.html)



Reports from the Congressional Research Service/ Library of Congress

- [The Electoral College: How It Works in Contemporary Presidential Elections](http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/36763.pdf) (pdf), by Thomas H. Neale, September 28, 2004
(<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/36763.pdf>)
- [Election of the President and Vice President by Congress: Contingent Election](http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/22682.pdf) (pdf), by Thomas H. Neale, January 17, 2001
(<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/22682.pdf>)
- [Presidential Elections in the United States: A Primer](http://www.usembassy.at/en/download/pdf/elections_primer.pdf) (pdf), by Kevin J. Coleman, Joseph E. Cantor and Thomas H. Neale, April 17, 2000
(http://www.usembassy.at/en/download/pdf/elections_primer.pdf)

CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

- [Federal Election Commission](http://www.fec.gov/)

(<http://www.fec.gov/>)

In 1975, Congress created the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to administer and enforce the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) - the statute that governs the financing of federal elections. The duties of the FEC, which is an independent regulatory agency, are to disclose campaign finance information, to enforce the provisions of the law such as the limits and prohibitions on contributions, and to oversee the public funding of Presidential elections.

- [Frequently Asked Questions About Election Day and Voting Procedures](http://www.fec.gov/pages/faqvdayeprocedures.htm) (<http://www.fec.gov/pages/faqvdayeprocedures.htm>)



ELECTORAL COLLEGE

http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections/elect_college.html;

http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections/elect_college/elect_college_more_info.html)

The framers of the U.S. constitution pondered several options for how to elect a president, including a direct popular vote. They rejected this procedure on the grounds that, given the poor state of communications and the large physical distances that separated the states, voters were likely to be familiar only with candidates from their state, and victories for a number of "favorite sons" might prevent the emergence of a single candidate. Either that, or the largest states would always dominate the process.

They opted instead for a Roman model, a College of Electors, in which each state would be represented by a number of individuals proportionate to its seats in Congress, that is, two Senators and a number of Representatives based on the state's population.

The advantages and disadvantages of the system have been debated since its adoption, and the process of selecting the electors and their voting procedures have evolved over the years. But it has served the country in over 50 presidential elections.

HOW THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE WORKS

(From the Federal Election Commission)

The current workings of the Electoral College are the result of both design and experience. As it now operates:

Each State is allocated a number of Electors equal to the number of its U.S. Senators (always 2) plus the number of its U.S. Representatives (which may change each decade according to the size of each State's population as determined in the Census).

The political parties (or independent candidates) in each State submit to the State's chief election official a list of individuals pledged to their candidate for president and equal in number to the State's electoral vote. Usually, the major political parties select these individuals either in their State party conventions or through appointment by their State party leaders while third parties and independent candidates merely designate theirs.

Members of Congress and employees of the federal government are prohibited from serving as an Elector in order to maintain the balance between the legislative and executive branches of the federal government.

After their caucuses and primaries, the major parties nominate their candidates for president and vice president in their national conventions traditionally held in the summer preceding the election. (Third parties and independent candidates follow different procedures according to the individual State laws). The names of the duly nominated candidates are then officially submitted to each State's chief election official so that they might appear on the general election ballot.

On the Tuesday following the first Monday of November in years divisible by four, the people in each State cast their ballots for the party slate of Electors representing their choice for president and vice president (although as a matter of practice, general election ballots normally say "Electors for" each set of candidates rather than list the individual Electors on each slate).

Whichever party slate wins the most popular votes in the State becomes that State's Electors-so that, in effect, whichever presidential ticket gets the most popular votes in a State wins all the Electors of that State. (The two exceptions to this are Maine and Nebraska where two Electors are chosen by statewide popular vote and the remainder by the popular vote within each Congressional district).

On the Monday following the second Wednesday of December (as established in federal law) each State's Electors meet in their respective State capitals and cast their electoral votes-one for president and one for vice president.

In order to prevent Electors from voting only for "favorite sons" of their home State, at least one of their votes must be for a person from outside their State (though this is seldom a problem since the parties have consistently nominated presidential and vice presidential candidates from different States).

The electoral votes are then sealed and transmitted from each State to the President of the Senate who, on the following January 6, opens and reads them before both houses of the Congress.

The candidate for president with the most electoral votes, provided that it is an absolute majority (one over half of the total), is declared president. Similarly, the vice presidential candidate with the absolute majority of electoral votes is declared vice president.

In the event no one obtains an absolute majority of electoral votes for president, the U.S. House of Representatives (as the chamber closest to the people) selects the president from among the top three contenders with each State casting only one vote and an absolute majority of the States being required to elect. Similarly, if no one obtains an absolute majority for vice president, then the U.S. Senate makes the selection from among the top two contenders for that office.

At noon on January 20, the duly elected president and vice president are sworn into office.

Occasionally questions arise about what would happen if the presidential or vice presidential candidate died at some point in this process. For answers to these, as well as to a number of other "what if" questions, readers are advised to consult a small volume entitled *After the People Vote: Steps in Choosing the President* edited by Walter Berns and published in 1983 by the American Enterprise Institute. Similarly, further details on the history and current functioning of the Electoral College are available in the second edition of *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections*, a real goldmine of information, maps, and statistics.

WEB RESOURCES

GENERAL INFORMATION

[Project Vote Smart](http://www.vote-smart.org/election_president.php) (http://www.vote-smart.org/election_president.php)

- listings of presidential candidates, by party, primary dates, Electoral College votes/state, and links to additional sites.

[Politics1](http://www.politics1.com/) (<http://www.politics1.com/>)

- Founded in 1997, Politics1 is published as a non-partisan public service to promote fully informed decision-making by the American electorate.

[Commission on Presidential Debates](http://www.debates.org/) (<http://www.debates.org/>)

- a nonprofit, nonpartisan corporation, sponsored all the presidential debates. Its primary purpose is to sponsor and produce debates for the United States presidential and vice presidential candidates and to undertake research and educational activities relating to the debates.

[Center for Voting and Democracy](http://www.fairvote.org/) (<http://www.fairvote.org/>)

- non-profit organization dedicated to fair elections where every vote counts and all voters are represented. The Center conducts research, analysis, education and advocacy to build understanding of and support for more democratic voting systems.

[electionline.org](http://www.electionline.org/index.jsp) (<http://www.electionline.org/index.jsp>)

- web site by the Election Reform Information Project. It is a non-partisan, non-advocacy page providing up-to-the-minute news and analysis on election reform.

[P2004 - Race for the White House](http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eaction/2004/P2004.html) (<http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eaction/2004/P2004.html>)

CANDIDATES

- [George W. Bush](http://www.georgewbush.com/) (<http://www.georgewbush.com/>)
 - [Republican National Committee](http://www.rnc.org/) (<http://www.rnc.org/>)
 - [Republican National Convention](http://www.2004nycgop.org/) (<http://www.2004nycgop.org/>), New York City, August 30-September 2, 2004
 - [2004 Republican Party Platform](http://www.gop.com/media/2004platform.pdf) (pdf) (<http://www.gop.com/media/2004platform.pdf>)
- [John Kerry](http://www.johnkerry.com/index.html) (<http://www.johnkerry.com/index.html>)
 - [Democratic National Committee](http://www.democrats.org/) (<http://www.democrats.org/>)
 - [Democratic National Convention](http://www.dems2004.org/) (<http://www.dems2004.org/>), Boston, July 26-29, 2004
 - [2004 Democratic Party Platform](http://www.democrats.org/platform/) (<http://www.democrats.org/platform/>)
- [Ralph Nader](http://www.votenader.org/) (<http://www.votenader.org/>)

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

[PoliticalMoneyLine](http://www.tray.com/) (<http://www.tray.com/>)

- web site to track contributions by individuals and PACs for presidential, congressional and gubernatorial candidates.

[opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org/) (<http://www.opensecrets.org/>)

- The Center for Responsive Politics is a non-partisan, non-profit research group based in Washington, D.C. that tracks money in politics, and its effect on elections and public policy. The Center conducts computer-based research on campaign finance issues for the news media, academics, activists, and the public at large. The Center's work is aimed at creating a more educated voter, an involved citizenry, and a more responsive government.

[Soft Money Laundromat](http://www.commoncause.org/laundromat/) (<http://www.commoncause.org/laundromat/>)

- a searchable database of special interest soft money contributions to the Democratic and Republican national party committees.

[Follow the Money](http://www.followthemoney.org/) (<http://www.followthemoney.org/>)

- The National Institute on Money in State Politics is a nonpartisan, nonprofit program dedicated to accurate, comprehensive and unbiased documentation and research on campaign finance at the state level.

PUBLIC OPINION SITES

[The Gallup Organization](http://www.gallup.com/) (<http://www.gallup.com/>)

- one of the oldest polling organizations in the U.S., Gallup will conduct numerous presidential, congressional and gubernatorial polls.

[The Pew Research Center for People and the Press](http://people-press.org/) (<http://people-press.org/>)

- an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues.

[Polling Report.com](http://www.pollingreport.com/wh2004.htm) (<http://www.pollingreport.com/wh2004.htm>)

- an independent, non-partisan resource on trends in American public opinion. This site offers a compilation of polling results from a variety of polling organizations on the 2004 presidential and congressional elections.

For additional information please contact the American Reference Center at: arc@usembassy.at.

Please visit the homepage of the U.S. Embassy Vienna, Austria at: <http://www.usembassy.at>



The program page on **“The U.S. Presidential Elections: Process and Politics in 2004”** will be available at:

<http://www.usembassy.at/en/embassy/photo/neale.htm>

Information about the services and resources of the American Reference Center is available at:

<http://www.usembassy.at/en/embassy/arc.htm>



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